White House Overlooks Gas Shortage

By Jack Anderson

At the same time that President Nixon is appealing to motorists to hold down their driving because of the gasoline shortage, a chauffeur-driven limousine regularly hauls his handsome Irish setter, King Timahoe, bteween Camp David and the White House.

The presidential pooch, perched in solitary splendor in the back seat of a blue Chrysler limousine, is accorded the same protocol as a five-start general or visting foreign dignitary.

Frequently, the dog rides in similar regal style on the last leg of the trip to the Western White House in San Clemente, Calif., while the President helicopters in from the El Toro Marine base.

As we reported two years ago, King Timahoe travels cross country in a luxurious Air Force jet. On at least one occasion, a special plane was wheeled out for the trip.

The crew was notified only that an "important personage" would be brought on board. Some low-ranking White House aides, waiting for the first available transportation, went along. But the "important personage" turned out to be King Timahoe.

We were told at first that the dog is chauffeured around because he is afraid of helicopters. But a White House spokesman denied this, saying King Timahoe often bounds straight for the presidential helicopter to greet his master.

The dog is provided limousine service, acknowledged the spokesman, when the helicopter is too crowded.

Footnote: There's little evidence that the White House is paying any attention to President Nixon's appeal to save gas. The First Family is chauffeured around in Cadillacs, Continentals and Chryslers. Nor do they seem inclined to switch to smaller models, which save on gas. Explained a Secret Service spokesman: "Large engines are necessary to support the security equipment on the cars."

Twenty senior White House aides, whose name are on the "A" list, are individually chauffeured to and from work each day. No effort has been made to form commuter pools, as the President has urged, for aides living in the same neighborhoods. Another 100 White House staff members, whose names are on the "B" list, have access during the day to some 25 cars. These used to be kept sitting in the driveway with their engines running and their air conditioners on so they'd be cool when some bigwig wanted to be driven somewhere. In recognition of the gas shortage, the engines are now turned off between trips.

Drug Prices — The United States is the only industrial nation in the world which doesn't, in some way, control the prices of medicinal drugs. Result: the greedy pharmaceutical firms have taken advantage of the government's laissez-faire attitude to gouge the sick, feeble and elderly.

This profiteering at the expense of the suffering has been the subject of a continuing investigation by Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D.Wis.) who has just finished contrasting drug prices in Canada and the U.S. He will soon present to the Senate these findings:

• Druggists on the U.S. side of the St. Mary River must pay the Upjohn Company 12 times more for Orinase, a drug used by diabetics, than it costs for the same drug on the Canadian side. In Sault St. Marie, Mich., druggists pay $82.68 for 1,000 half-milligram capsules. In Sault St. Marie, Canada, druggists pay only $6.63 for the same quantity.

• In the same sister cities, the elderly pay 18 times more for Butazolidin, an anti-arthritis drug, on the American side than on the Canadian side.

• Old people who need the drug Hydrodiuril for their high blood pressure are soaked 5 times more for it on the U.S. side of the border. Merck, Sharpe & Dohme charges U.S. druggists $75 for 1,000 50-milligrams, which are available in Canada for only $4.63.

• An anti-infective drug called Furadantim is marketed in Michigan by Eaton Laboratories for $161.88 for 1,000 100-milligram capsules. The same amount can be purchased in Canada for $9.45.

The giant drug firms are able to gouge their American customers because the U.S. government has no mechanism for controlling drug prices. The pharmaceutical companies are free, therefore, to charge whatever the market will bear.

But in Canada, the government has a compulsory licensing system for drug patents. If the drug producers charge excessive prices, the Canadian government simply licenses other companies to handle the product. This has effectively held down drug prices.

Fancy Luncheon—Mrs. Spiro Agnew, the Vice President's wife, plans to take over the second floor of the Smithsonian's portrait gallery today to entertain the Empress of Iran among the historic portraits.

Smithsonian officials acknowledged to us that it is against policy to permit private parties, unless they are connected with the museum. Then they are permitted only in the evening after the Smithsonian is closed. The Agnew luncheon will take place in the middle of the day during the height of the tourist season.

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